PHIL 308 – Social and Political Philosophy
University of Oregon
Winter, 2012

Instructor: Steven Brence
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Office: 327 PLC
Hours: 1-3, Wednesdays (and by appointment)

Course Description:

This course will focus on several key works in social and political philosophy in the 20th century that remain timely, even radical, in the 21st. In the last century, developments such as that of evolutionary theory, Freudian psychology, advanced technologies, and the rise of large scale institutions like business corporations, among others, severely challenged our dominant political theories, many of which were developed hundreds of years prior. Yet these theories, however staggered and hobbled, remain those to which we still largely turn today. The texts presented in this course will both explore how these developments challenge the viability of our time-worn conceptions of such things as individualism, democratic agency, political rationality, and the form and function of desire in social and political life, and offer suggestions as to how those conceptions may be modified in light of those developments. We will reconsider, through these texts, the challenges provided by those broad cultural and intellectual shifts, and will critically consider the applicability of those texts to our present.

Required Texts: (available for purchase at the UO Bookstore)

- John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*
- Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*
- Theodor Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*
  
  [Sufficient copies of this text may not become available until week 2 or 3.]

Course Requirements and Grades:

- Three Essays, 5 pages in length. (75%)
- Attendance, Participation, and Written Responses, 1 page in length, to selected readings. These will be assigned in class. They are also due in class, the day the relevant reading is discussed in class, and may not be submitted late. Two of these may be missed with no penalty, but none will be accepted late. Extra credit will be granted if all are submitted and of high quality. (25%)

Assignment Guidelines: (please read this carefully)

All written work, unless otherwise specified, should be written independently. You are encouraged to discuss all aspects of this course with your fellow students, but the work you turn in must be entirely your own. All materials quoted or referenced in producing your written work must be properly cited. Essays must be submitted through SafeAssignment, a Blackboard based anti-plagiarism service subscribed to by the University of Oregon (details on assignments). Any confirmed incidence of plagiarism will result, at minimum, in a failing grade for the course. Late essays will be marked down according to degree of lateness. Late reading responses will not be accepted.
Schedule*:

Week 1 (Jan. 9 - 11)

Introduction.
John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, Ch. 1, 2 and 3, pp. 5-25.

Week 2 (Jan. 18)


**Wednesday Jan. 18th: Essay #1 Assigned**

Week 3 (Jan. 23 - 25)

Dewey, *Individualism*, Ch. 6, 7 and 8, pp. 50-83.

**Friday, Jan. 27th (5 p.m.): Essay #1 Due**

Week 4 (Jan. 30 - Feb. 1)

Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 1 and 2, pp. 1-55.

Week 5 (Feb. 6 - 8)

Marcuse, *ODE*, Ch. 3 and 4, pp. 56-120.

Week 6 (Feb. 13 - 15)

Marcuse, *ODE*, Ch. 5 and 6, pp. 123-169.

Week 7 (Feb. 20 - 22)

Marcuse, *ODE*, Ch. 7 and 8, pp. 170-224.

**Wednesday Feb. 22nd: Essay #2 Assigned**

Week 8 (Feb. 27 - 29)

Marcuse, *ODE*, Ch. 9 and 10, pp. 225-257.

**Friday, Mar. 2nd (5 p.m.): Essay #2 Due**

Week 9 (Mar. 5 - 7)


Week 10 (Mar. 12 - 14)

Adorno, *Stars*, pp. 94-123.

**Monday Mar. 12th: Essay #3 Assigned**

Finals Week

**Tuesday, March 20th (5 p.m.): Essay #3 Due**

*I reserve the right to modify this schedule at any time. It is the responsibility of students to be aware of announced changes.*